

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 229212

43

ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:AATHIBAUT,JR.:JES

APPROVED BY NEA/INS:DKUX

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R 160254Z SEP 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 229212

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: EINV, CE

SUBJECT: PFIZER PHARMACEUTICALS IN SRI LANKA

REFS: (A) EMBASSY MEMCON, JULY 26, 1976; (B) PERKINS-  
THIBAUT LETTER, SEPTEMBER 1

1. DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN APPROACHED INFORMALLY BY FORMER  
PFIZER-SRI LANKA MANAGING DIRECTOR WARREN WILLIAMS CONCERN-  
ING POSSIBLE USG HELP IN SORTING OUT LONGSTANDING PROBLEMS  
WITH THE GSL. WILLIAMS CURRENTLY IS WITH DOMESTIC SIDE OF  
PFIZER BUT CONTACTED US ON BASIS OF PERSONAL FAMILIARITY  
WITH COMPANY'S SITUATION IN SRI LANKA. WILLIAMS NOTED IN  
CONVERSATION WITH NEA/INS (THIBAUT) THAT REQUEST BY CUR-  
RENT PFIZER MANAGING DIRECTOR ROGER BEHRENHAUSEN FOR RE-  
NEWAL OR EXTENSION OF RESIDENCY VISA WAS RECENTLY TURNED  
DOWN, THEREBY FORESHADOWING MANAGEMENT GAP IN COLOMBO WHEN  
CURRENT VISA EXPIRES ON DECEMBER 31. WILLIAMS REVIEWED  
HISTORY OF PAST STRAINS BETWEEN PFIZER AND GSL AND EXPRESSED  
APPRECIATION FOR EMBASSY SUPPORT WHERE THIS WAS POSSIBLE,  
AND IN THIS CONTEXT CITED JULY 26 MEETING BETWEEN AMBASSADOR  
AND BEHRENHAUSEN WHERE VISA QUESTION WAS DISCUSSED (REF A).

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PAGE 02 STATE 229212

2. PFIZER BELIEVES THAT HARD-LINE ATTITUDE OF GSL ON VISA

QUESTION, IF SUSTAINED, WILL PLACE COMPANY'S INTERESTS IN

SERIOUS JEOPARDY. PFIZER AT PRESENT TIME LACKS QUALIFIED CEYLONSE REPLACEMENT FOR BEHRENHAUSEN; THUS IN COMPANY'S VIEW, DENIAL OF VISA GOES TO THE VERY HEART OF ITS OPERATIONS IN SRI LANKA. ESPECIALLY SO, ACCORDING TO WILLIAMS, AS BEHRENHAUSEN HAS BEEN INFORMED ORALLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT GOVERNMENT WILL NOT GRANT VISA TO EXPATRIATE SUCCESSOR AND INSISTS ON CEYLONSE NATIONAL. IN VIEW OF THIS SITUATION, WILLIAMS STATED THAT PFIZER PLANS TO WRITE TO THE DEPARTMENT REQUESTING MEETING TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES OF USG SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF COMPANY IN ITS TROUBLES WITH THE GSL.

3. COMMENT: OUR CURRENT THINKING IS THAT WE WILL ENDORSE STRONGLY EMBASSY'S ADVICE TO BEHRENHAUSEN THAT SENIOR COMPANY OFFICIAL TRAVEL TO COLOMBO (REF B) WITH A VIEW TO ESTABLISHING SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN PFIZER'S LONG-RUN INTENTIONS IN SRI LANKA. A REVIEW OF THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US SUGGESTS STRONGLY THAT A CLASH OF PERSONALITIES AS MUCH AS SPECIFIC ISSUES MAY BE INVOLVED, WHICH ENCOURAGES US TO THINK THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE ON AN INFORMAL BASIS, AS WE HAVE IN THE PAST. OUR FEELING IS THAT THE RIGID ATTITUDE TOWARD PFIZER ON THE VISA MATTER IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE GSL'S PROFESSED INTEREST IN ATTRACTING FOREIGN INVESTMENT. WE ARE THINKING OF SUGGESTING TO PFIZER THAT OBJECT OF COMPANY OFFICER'S VISIT BE AIMED MORE AT CALMING LOCAL WATERS AND LESS AT ARRIVING AT A DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF POLICY DIFFERENCES ON EVE OF SRI LANKA ELECTIONS. A SIX OR EIGHT MONTH VISA EXTENSION COULD CARRY PFIZER OVER THE ELECTION PERIOD TO A MORE APPROPRIATE TIME WHEN FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS COULD BE ADDRESSED.

4. ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION EMBASSY MAY HAVE AS WELL AS YOUR VIEWS ON OUR PROPOSED APPROACH WOULD BE APPRECIATED.  
ROBINSON

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